

# Major Joseph Mills Hanson and Keystone War Views

by Ralph Reiley

In early 1915, Underwood and Underwood published the first set of war views in the United States. They happened to have a photographer in Eastern Europe when the war broke out. He was in Serbia and took a number of photos of the Serbian army, then and France as he made his way back across Europe so he could return to the United States. The war was not expected to last long, and they wanted to publish views before the war ended and interest was high.

Not to be outdone, or outsold, Keystone soon followed with their first set of war views. Keystone did not have a photographer in Europe, nor did they purchase the rights to any photographer's negatives. They took 30 stock photos from previous sets and wrote new captions, making them appear to be relevant to the war, then in progress. Photos came from travel sets, a 1908 celebration in Quebec of marching troops and naval vessels, Boer War, Boxer Rebellion, and Russo-Japanese War sources. It is one of the most unusual sets of war views ever published, as all of the views were taken prior to 1912, some dating back to the late 19th

century. The war began in August of 1914.

In 1916, Keystone expanded their set of views to 48 views, and a smaller set of 30 views. They purchased up to 100 negatives from French and German sources, and there may have been a special order set of 100 views, but a complete set is unknown at this time. Many of the recycled 1915 views were still used, as well as some actual views of the war in France purchased from French and German sources. While Keystone and the other publishers were not opposed to recycling views, they did have a real problem in obtaining current photographs. All nations involved in the war kept strict censorship on photographs, and only allowed official photographers access to the front lines. They also staged carefully prepared photo shoots for civilian journalists. These photos show that the soldiers were well fed, well clothed, and the enemy was destructive to buildings and property. Dead soldiers were not to be photographed. So current and interesting photos were not readily available, and the publishers had to make do with what they could get, or had on hand.

In April 1917 the United States entered the war. Many views were added showing thousands of American soldiers at training camps, and many photos of the navy were added, some dating back to 1898, during the Spanish American War. The deluxe set of views was expanded to 100, with a less costly version of 30 views. In 1918, the set was modified slightly.

With the end of the war in 1919 censorship was relaxed, more interesting views became available, and the set was expanded to 200 views with 100, 48 and 30 view versions. This set was modified in 1920 by the replacement of a few of the stock photos with those actually from the war, although a few stock photos stayed in place, especially the ones with a very good stereoscopic effect. In France, various veteran groups demanded that all the official war photos be published, including the stereo views. These were very candid shots that revealed the true nature of the war. Keystone did not use many of these candid and graphic views until 1932, in their last revision to the war views.

## Confessions of a 3-D Cult Member

by Ralph Reiley

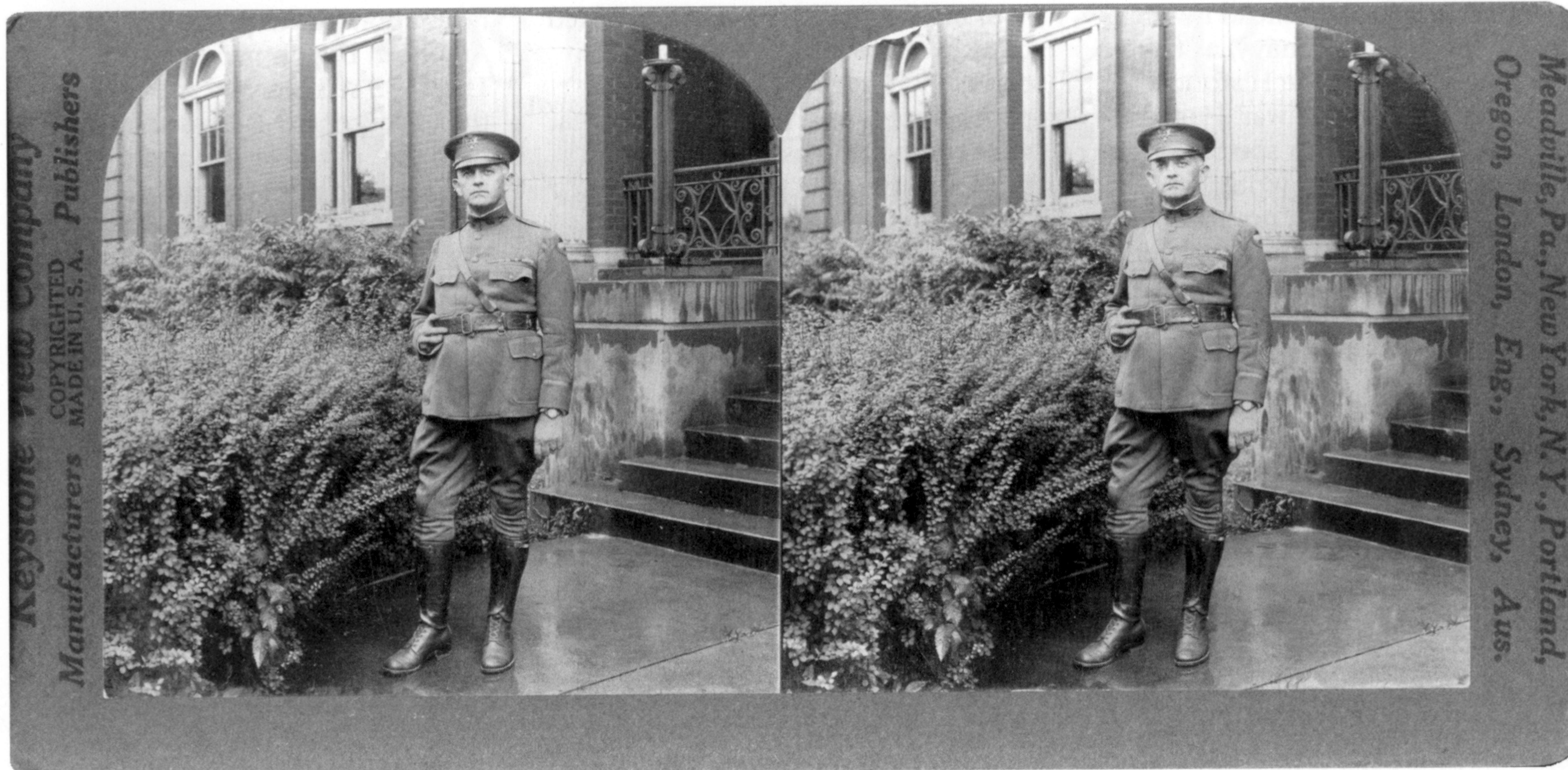
In 1964, when I was 8 years old, I had a revelation. My dad was a veteran of World War Two, as was just about everybody's dad that I knew at the time. I had not really thought much about what those three words actually meant, other than *Big-important-thing*. I had just come to terms with the concept that the world had existed long before I was born. My sense of time had just shifted from always being now, to a sense of the past, the present and the future. We were visiting my grandparents, and my grandpa mentioned that he was a veteran of WW2, and something called WW1.

I was amazed, I had never heard of it before. Now it made sense, World War Two, World War One. Wars had numbers! Who Knew? What else was there that I did not know? As I soon discovered, there was a whole universe chock full of

things I did not know about. It is now forty eight years later, and while I have been very busy, I still have not made much of a dent in the things I don't know about.

As my grandpa went on to tell me, he had enlisted in the U.S. Cavalry in 1916, and was part of General Pershing's army that invaded Mexico in search of Pancho Villa. My grandpa gave me his Stetson hat, his spurs, and his victory medal from World War 1. They were the beginning of my militaria collection, and to me they are priceless family heirlooms. I went to the library and got a picture book of World War 1. It was full of photos of these weird airplanes, tanks, and soldiers with hats with spikes on them. I have been fascinated by that era ever since.





In 1921, Keystone acquired the rights to the Underwood & Underwood negatives, adding nearly a million views to their already massive library. In 1922, a new set of 300 war views was introduced, also with 200, 100, 48 and 30 view versions. The addition of the higher quality Underwood views greatly enhanced the look of the Keystone set.

All the various publishers of war view sets had a common fault; they were just a collection of photographs. There was nothing to put them into chronological order or into the historic context of the war. It was left to the viewer to provide their own context to the views. Keystone made

*A Keystone view of Major Joseph Mills Hanson. It is assumed that this photo was taken in 1922, just after Major Hanson became associated with Keystone and after his discharge from active duty with the army. The view was not a part of any known set of Keystone views, and is believed to be a door to door salesman's give-away as a bonus for buying a set of views.*

inquires to the War Department for someone who could help them modify their set of views into a comprehensive illustrated history of the war, as well as help them prepare a guide book to be sold with the views. Both the War department and the American Legion recommended Major Joseph Mills Hanson as the best man for the job.

Hanson was a fairly well known historian at the time, and he was well known in military circles as well.

He had written some books on the history of North Dakota and Missouri before the war. He was called up for duty in the North Dakota National Guard in 1916 for Mexican Boarder Service. His unit was deactivated in 1917, and he was transferred into the American Expeditionary Force and sent to France. He served with the 147th Field Artillery, Captain-Adjutant of the 2nd Battalion. Soon after his arrival in France, he was placed on the writing staff of

After college I got a job, and started earning money. I then began to collect things from World War 1. Helmets, gas masks, bayonets, medals, soldier's field equipment, rifles, pistols, post cards, recruiting posters, war bond posters, etc. It started to get really expensive, and I needed to find a low cost alternative. In 1985, at a flea market south of Atlanta, I discovered some weird photos of World War 1. They were on grey cards, they were curved, and there were two seemingly identical photos pasted on it. The dealer had this old viewer, so I put the card in, and looked at the photo. It was amazing! Here was a photo of some French soldiers, and it was like looking out of a window, but in black and white! The effect was mesmerizing. I had never seen anything like this before. The photo was amazing, it was of World War 1, and it cost less than a \$1.00! It was perfect.

I started collecting World War 1 stereo views, as they were very interesting, and very cheap. Nobody seemed to want them, and the dealers were just about giving them away. That was over 30 years ago, and, sadly, things have changed. They are no longer very cheap, but still much less than

stereo views of the Civil War era. That is what lured me into the cult of the 3-D image. After a while, the photos were not enough, so I started experimenting with cameras, and after some trial and many errors, I acquired a Stereo Realist, which I am still happily using, along with the Fuji W3, which I got last year.

In 2006, I joined the Atlanta Stereographic Association, and I was drawn further into the cult of 3-D. In 2009, I found that if I sent John Dennis a well written article about some aspect of 3-D photography, he would print it in *Stereo World*, the best magazine in print today. I have been able to combine my interest in WW1 with the cult of the 3-D image. Now I have become so firmly entrenched into the 3-D cult, I will probably never be able to escape. I did take up the fiddle six years ago. I am being drawn into another cult. The cult of old time fiddle and contra dance music. The two cults will probably co-exist just fine, and I will not be able to escape either one. Things could be worse; I may not have joined either cult.

- RLR



*Stars and Stripes*, the official newspaper for the army and navy, as first officer in charge of the Historical Sub-Section. After the war, Hanson remained in Europe as special writer for *Stars and Stripes* to write the "History of the American Combat Divisions". He also spent time researching the history of the countryside along the Marne River, which resulted later in publication of a book, *The Marne, Historic and Picturesque*. During his time in Europe after WWI, Hanson represented GHQ at the organization convention of the American Legion in Paris, in March 1919. With the AEF Press Special, he visited many of the battlefields of France and Belgium. He witnessed the Inter-allied Games in June 1919 and published a history of the games entitled *History of the Inter-Allied Games Pershing Stadium, 1919*. This was a basketball tournament organized by General Pershing with the United States, France and Italy represented with teams. Hanson returned to the U.S. late in 1919, and spent almost one year writing for General Pershing's staff for *The Home Sector* and *The Independence*. He was officially discharged from active duty in 1920, and was promoted to Major of the Field Artillery Reserve.

In 1922, Hanson set to work on the project with Keystone. In 1923, Keystone began selling their revised set of views and the guide book. This set went into six printings and sold very well for nine years, when it was revised again in 1932. It is hard to tell how much of the change was due to Major Hanson's work or other Keystone staff, but the 1923 set of views was a remarkable improvement over the 1921 set. It had the deluxe version of 300 views, as well as 200, 100, 75 and 50 view versions. The guide book has testimonials from many illustrious American military men of the time, including General Pershing. There is no doubt that this was as a result of Major Hanson's connections.

The guide book, *The World War Through the Stereoscope*, has a wealth of detail in it. It has a biographical sketch of Major Hanson, stock essays on stereo photography by Oliver Wendell Holmes and others, a chronological outline of the war's events, a set of war statistics compiled by Hanson, a condensed version of the official *Statistical Summa-*

*ry of the War with Germany*, a detailed catalog of the photos, two long essays by Hanson, one on stereo photography in war and his personal view on the war, as well as a poem by Hanson on the U.S. flag flying over castle Ehrenbreistein in Germany.

The organization of the views of the 1923 set is more or less chronological, although there are some errors. Some of the more misleading captions were corrected, and some of the text on the rear of the views was modified. It is a remarkable set of views, with some action photos, and most of the nations involved are represented, as are the Italian, Eastern, African and Middle Eastern fronts. Keystone attempted to present a comprehensive photo record of the War, although the American forces are very well represented. The last photos of the set cover the Versailles treaty and the establishment of the League of Nations.

Major Hanson later went on to work for the National Park service, and became an advocate for preserving Civil War battlefields. In later years he also wrote and co-authored several books on Civil War history. He passed away in 1960 at the age of 94.

In 1932, Keystone modified the war view set again. It was expanded to 400 views, with less expensive versions of 200 and 100 views. The section on U.S. soldiers at training camps was greatly reduced. Some views of devastated French cities are included along with the post war

restorations, as well as the 1927 American Legion parade in Paris. The 1932 sets are very scarce due to the effects of the Depression, the high cost of the views, and a general reduction in interest in the war. By 1930, Keystone was the largest publisher in the world, as well as being one of the few remaining stereo view publishers. They had bought up the negatives of most of their competitors, giving them a truly massive negative library. The 1932 set retained much of the structure of the 1923 set, with the addition of British, Australian, German and French views. It is a remarkable set of views, mainly because of the very candid French views, and probably the single best set of war views ever published. The guidebook was reprinted for the 1932 set, the only change being the catalog of views. Major Hanson is named as editor in the guide book, but it is not known if he was involved in the 1932 revisions.

#### Sources:

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Information from Ms. Kimberly Kulak, Johnson-Shaw Museum, Meadville Pa.

*The World War Through the Stereoscope*, Edited by Major Joseph Mills Hanson, Keystone View Company, 1923

University of South Dakota Archives

South Dakota State Archives 

## Digital Pairing Speeds Portrait Camera 3-D Search

While searching for Civil War photos on the Library of Congress website, Wayne Karberg recently found several scans of images from four-lens portrait cameras. Combining some of the scattered images using StereoPhoto Maker, he discovered anew the potential for 3-D in the output of these cameras that stereo collectors have appreciated for many years—the top or bottom pairs of lenses produce reasonably good stereo in close portraits. (Chapter four of Bob Zeller's *The*

*Civil War in Depth* explains and illustrates eight examples!) The Library website removes the need to pour through collections of Carte de Visite prints by presenting scans from the original negatives, and Mr. Karberg has invested the time and effort to find an impressive selection of Civil War era, unintentionally stereoscopic portraits at [www.flickr.com/photos/turbguy/8506460387/in/photostream](http://www.flickr.com/photos/turbguy/8506460387/in/photostream) or the Library site, [www.loc.gov/pictures](http://www.loc.gov/pictures). 